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ABSTRACT

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THE BUREAUCRATIC TRADITION IN LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATION: THE LEGACY OF SPANISH COLONIALISM

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ABSTRACT

The Bureaucratic Tradition in Latin American Education: The Legacy of Spanish Colonialism

As Latin American nations marshall their rapidly growing human and material resources, they frequently encounter organizational infrastructures which are incapable of supporting the rapid process of modernization. Yet, these inadequate infrastructures persist over time leaving behind unrecoverable losses. Attempts to understand the problems of modernization must not only consider questions of social and economic development, but also questions reflecting on the development of organizational and administrative processes. The administrative processes in Latin America are so rooted in their traditions that it is difficult to understand current organizational behavior without looking back to the administrative patterns which were firmly entrenched during the 300 years of Spanish colonialism.

This study, conducted in part by a field research methodology, examines the bureaucratic character of the modern Ministry of Education in Venezuela. The organizational elements of, (a) centralized decision-making, (b), hierarchy, (c) standardization of procedure, (d) rule elaboration, and (e) communication processes are examined in terms of their functional and dysfunctional consequences for the process of modernization. These same organizational elements are also placed in their cultural, political, and historical context which assists us in understanding why they exist as they exist as well as why such extreme difficulty is associated with attempts to change the administrative procedures.

THE BUREAUCRATIC TRADITION IN LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATION: THE LEGACY OF SPANISH COLONIALISM

In a distant corner of the great plains of Venezuela, not far from the iron-rich reserves of the Guayana Region, there sits a small, one-room rural school house which serves as the hope for a better life for the 15 or 20 campesino children in attendance. One bright morning not so long ago the maestra was orchestrating her restless charges when a delivery truck arrived with, of all things, a bicycle from the Ministry of Education. The children could hardly be contained and the teacher was as pleased as she was amazed. She had never submitted a request for a bicycle to the Ministry and nothing ever happened without such a request.

Looking back into the issue it was found that the former teacher who had been at the school two years previous to the arrival of the delivery truck had submitted a request, but she had waited in vain. The visitor, who by chance happened to be at the school that day, was as amazed as the teacher, but for a different reason. The visitor was stunned by the fact that the administrative mechanisms of the Ministry could and would respond to a request two years after the fact. The example of the bicycle and the rural school teacher is hardly an event of significant proportions, but when acted out in a

thousand ways in a thousand different placed at the same moment in time the accumulative effect can be crushing.

As Venezuela and other Latin American nations begin to marshall their rapidly growing human and material resources, they frequently encounter organizational infrastructures which are incapable of supporting the rapid process of modernization. Yet, these inadequate infrastructures seem to persist over time, leaving behind unrecoverable losses. Attempts to understand the problems of modernization must not only consider questions of social and economic development, but also questions reflecting on the development of organizational and administrative processes. Because the administrative processes in Spanish America are so rooted in their traditions, it is difficult to understand contemporary organizational behavior without looking back to the administrative pattern which became firmly entrenched during the 300 years of Spanish colonialism.

This study is based in part on a field research methodology which was carried out, in the main, in Venezuela. Interviews, participant-observation, and document search (historical and contemporary) played significant roles in the data-gathering process. This paper attempts to place the modern administrative machinery of the educational process in Venezuela in its political, cultural and historical context, thus facilitating an understanding of the dysfunctional characteristics of the administration of education and the difficulty associated with changing the process to place it more in concert with the needs of a modernizing nation.

This paper will trace the evolution of administration in government and education through four distinct periods of Venezuelan history: the Spanish colonial period, the post-revolutionary period of mixed despotism and anarchy, the militaristic period of the early part of this century, and the democratic era of contemporary Venezuela. The central theme of this paper is the argument that the organizational and administrative mechanisms of institutional governance have never quite broken loose from the historic legacy of Spanish colonialism and that the needs of a modernizing nation are being served by an administrative dinosaur.

Colonialism and the Formal System of Administration

Following the dream of gold and pearls, Alonso de Ojeda entered the massive salt water Lake Maracaibo in 1499 and, seeing the Indian villages build on stilts, named the region "Little Venice" (Venezuela). The early attraction of gold and pearls soon faded when an abundance of treasure was not discovered and "Little Venice" fell far behind Perú, Colombia, and New Spain (Mexico) in attraction to, and attention from, the Spanish crown. Venezuela had few recognizable natural blessings in those early years -- even the native Indians had a low level of cultural development, far below that of the mighty Incas of Perú, Chibchas of Colombia, and Aztecs of Mexico. With Alonso de Ojeda came a historic legacy of governance which was forever planted on the national territory of Venezuela. Along with its language, architecture, legal structure, religion, and cultural values, Venezuela inherited its organizational and administrative models from Spain and, during the 300 years that the Spanish crown controlled New World colonies, these social, political, and economic frameworks became firmly entrenched.

The Royal Hierarchy and the Rule of Law

During the colonial period in Hispanic America, Spain created a formal pyramid of organizational control which, in hierarchical fashion, stretched from the crown to his subjects in the New World. At the top of the hierarchy in Spain were the king and his Council of the Indies. The hierarchical character of the ruling structure in the New World changed periodically over the long years of colonialism, but basically the descending order of governing councils were: the vice royalty, headed by the viceroy; the audiencia, headed by a governor, a captain-general, or a president depending on the status of the audiencia; the province, headed by a governor; and, finally, the cabildo (municipal council) headed by a mayor.

The colonies were regarded as integral parts of the Spanish empire and the basic units of administration were the provinces, roughly evolving from the early land grants extended to explorers and settlers. The provinces were ruled by governors who served as civil and military leaders and were technically subordinate to an audiencia council. The provinces were grouped into kingdoms of which there were 14 over the colonial period. These royal kingdoms ultimately formed the boundaries of several of the independent nations that were to spring up after the wars of independence early in the 19th century (Phelan, 1967:119).

The highest power in each kingdom was the audiencia which was a judicial body, but in practice the judges played significant administrative, political, and military functions. The two most prestigious audiencias maintained a status of vice royalties and they were situated in Mexico City and Lima. The vice royalty of New Spain (1535) included

all the territory claimed by the king located in North America, and the vice royalty seated in Lima (1544) included all the territory located in South America. In 1717 the vice royalty of Nueva Granada was formed and in 1776 a fourth vice royalty, Río de la Plata, was formed. The viceroy's control over regional audiencias was, in reality, marginal and in many instances no more than symbolic. The first province created on present-day Venezuelan territory was formed in 1528 and fell under the audiencia control of Santo Domingo. The administrative control of this province was shuffled back and forth between Santo Domingo and Santa Fé de Bogotá until 1786 when the audiencia of Caracas was established.

The dominant role played by the king in the formal organizational structure is outlined by Jesús de Galíndez (1954: 61-62).

> The king ruled and legislated; the king named the authorities and in his behalf, justice was administered; settlers and Indians were vassals of the monarch; the king was owner of lands and water which he granted as rewards, while keeping a substantial part of their products. During the three centuries of Spanish colonialism, the king was everything.

The highest councils of administration in the New World were supposedly judicial in character rather than executive or legislative. The law was written in Spain and imposed upon the colonists in the New World. The task of administrative control was formally specified to enforce the law through judicial processes; not even the viceroys or governors were officially empowered to legislate on even the most routine of administrative decisions. As John Phelan (1960: 51) points out,

"...every aspect of colonial life down to the most minute and insignificant details was regulated by a voluminous body of paternalistically inspired legislation issued by the Council. Viceroys and governors were under standing orders to enforce these mandates."

The unwieldy mix of judicial processes, volumes of rules (drafted in Spain), and hierarchical leadership amounted to an administrative system which was as complex as it was unrealistic. But surprisingly enough, realism in the formal inscription of the codes of law and justice was never a primary objective. Old Spain inherited from Rome a conception of law which was based on a moral interpretation of life. Roman law defined standards based on ethical goals which were derived from nature and reason, and, ultimately, christianity. This conception of law gave it an unrealistic character because emphasis was placed on how people ought to behave and little thought was given to how people actually behaved. This idealistic portrait of human behavior, which was steadfastly exported to Spanish America, was the backdrop which was supposed to give structure to the administrative processes of the New World. Frank Moreno (1967: 309) writes:

> From its very origins, written Spanish law was far more an expression of ideals to be attained than a reflection of reality. The idealism and universalism of the Romans translated into Christian terminology determined the Spanish conception of law and politics. Custom and tradition gave way to high-sounding ethical and spiritual principles as the primary sources of law. The acceptance of ancient local habits was undermined by a legal system which claimed moral superiority. Law, in the name of justice, parted from reality.

The sense of pursuing the ideal can be witnessed through the process of standardization as practiced by the king and his Council of the Indies. The notions of regional differences and local conditions across the empire were usually of little importance when it came to drafting regulations of govenance and conduct. The objective, after all, was for the populace to adjust itself to a better, more inherently perfect set of standards rather than to a set of standards which somehow reflected and supported the divergent interests and needs of the various regional provinces.

The character of Spanish rule was authoritarian in that formal power was not shared by anyone outside the immediate council of the king. The general acceptance by the populace of the legitimate rule of the monarch is the significant fact which distinguishes authoritarianism as practiced by the crown and authoritarianism as practiced by a regime which forces its control on a populace. The colonial political formula based on acceptance rather than coercion and violence dramatically changed, however, in the period following the war of independence when the new nation of Venezuela found that the glue which held it together was composed of fear, greed, and brutality.

In short, the picture of the crown's control over the colonies represents the formal structure of organization and administrative control. It also represents the ideal (the way it ought to be) as typified in Roman thought. In an official sense, the monarch and his subjects believed that their behavior in its ideal state was governed

by a formal set of charters which gave structure to their lives. Thus, from this perspective, it is possible to view the crown as directly controlling the lives of his subjects through the formal hierarchy. In reality, this structure of governance generally proved unworkable and between the lines there grew up an informal system which made it possible for the colonies to carry out the day-to-day tasks of living based, at least in part, on their own definitions of their own political and social realities. The ideal and the real were carried forward simultaneously, like two parallel but interlocking systems of thought. This dualism was understood by both the crown and the colonists and each was willing to use either the formal or informal system when it proved to be to their best advantage.

Colonialism and the Informal System of Administration

The idealistic character of the formal system of administration dictated from the Iberian Peninsula was uncompromisingly rigid, basically uncorrelated with reality, and impractical. In order to circumvent the highly restrictive body of laws, an informal system of administration came into being which would give the colonists extensive control over their own affairs without directly affronting the king.

Decentralization of Decision Making

In order to develop sufficient flexibility to insure a workable administrative system, an informal practice developed, also having its origin in Roman law, which stipulated that the sovereign could not intentionally do any injustice to his subjects. The se acata pero no

se cumple (I obey but I do not execute) principle was key to the process of decentralization. John Phelan (1960: 59) explains this principle which led to a balance between rigid authority and pragmatic flexibility.

> The 'I obey' clause signifies the recognition by subordinates of the legitimacy of the sovereign power who, if properly informed of all circumstances, would will no wrong. The 'I do not execute' clause is the subordinate's assumption of the responsibility of postponing the execution of an order until the sovereign is informed of those conditions of which he may be ignorant and without knowledge of which an injustice may be committed.

Of course, the colonists were skilled enough to delay and confuse numerous issues over extended periods of time resulting in a significant measure of local control over local issues. The crown, however, had its means of circumventing this local tactic when the stakes seemed high enough. This response strategy will be discussed at the conclusion of this section.

Checks and Balances

Most republican forms of government develop elaborate and precise forms of checks and balances with the end objective of creating a "self-correcting" structure of governance. Each of the three traditional branches -- executive, legislative, and judicial -- serve to keep the others honest. To have formally created executive and legislative branches in the colonies would have provided the colonists with autonomy of action independent of the monarch, and that was unthinkable because the perspective that the crown had of the colonists was one of extreme suspicion and distrust. The process of formal government in the

colonies was strictly judicial -- that is, hearing and passing judgment on local cases based on laws written in Spain.

Some form of administrative mechanism was necessary to serve the same function as that of the self-correcting, check and balances strategy. The system that evolved to fulfill this function was to deliberately leave vague the areas of responsibility between different governing colonial bodies. This strategy led to continuous internal struggles in the colonies, resulting in continuous reports to the king which directed attention to other persons or groups that were trying to expand their sphere of influence or dabble in illicit practices. With numerous parties sharing the responsibility of protecting the interest of the king, one party was not likely to get very far through illicit activity without drawing fire from the others. Clarence Haring (1947: 122) observes, "There never was a clear-cut line of demarcation between the functions of various governmental agencies dealing with colonial problems. On the contrary, a great deal of overlapping was deliberately fostered to prevent officials from unduly building up personal prestige or engaging in corrupt or fraudulent practices."

Communication

All systems of administration in their decision-making processes are dependent on clear and comprehensive information reflecting on the issues surrounding the people who are being managed. In all hierarchical organizations there exists a prescribed channel of communication extending from the lowest level through the various officials in the chain of command and terminating with the chief authority. An almost universal problem exists in the process of administration as the chief authority

attempts to obtain prompt and truthful information about the state of people and events from the officials at lower levels. The officials at lower levels attempt to "filter out" negative information, thereby protecting their vested interests, and presenting a picture upward that suggests an effective and efficient operation. Usually, the taller the hierarchy, the more distorted the picture becomes.

In the formal order of administration, the Spanish crown was structured to receive and ponder only that information which came through the prescribed channels; this information was, more often than not, extremely biased or slanted by the time it reached the royal Council of the Indies. In order to obtain more truthful information, an informal practice developed of permitting any subject of the king to petition the crown directly. On this subject Frank Moreno (1967: 316) writes, "The king, in his paternalistic role of moderating power, was able to communicate with everyone directly in complete disregard of the pyramidal organization prescribed by the legislation. Any colonial subjects or institutions desiring to approach the Crown could do so as long as they would invoke religion or justice in their appeal. In the light of these circumstances it is quite understandable that no one felt the slightest compulsion to obey his superior whenever he did not agree with his commands."

Thus, through the existence of multiple sources of information extending from the colonies, it was not nearly as possible or probable that lower officials in the chain of command could paint a rosy but inaccurate picture of the state of affairs simply through the control and manipulation of the official communication channel. As a result, the antichambers of the monarch were usually overflowing with impatient men from the colonies who

wanted to right a wrong, set the record straight, report on a deteriorating state of affairs, or simply ask a favor not granted by the governor or viceroy. No matter how irritating these petitioners must have been, they provided a valuable service to the king.

Local Government

Local government was officially administered through municipal bodies called cabildos. The cabildo tended to serve a dual function: on the one hand it served as a power base for the interrelated groupings of prominent families, commercial entrepreneurs, and landed aristocracy as they struggled in concert to obtain greater power, prestige, and economic footholds over and above the rest of the local residents. On the other hand, the cabildo served as a defensive shield behind which the local oligarchy attempted to protect its many vested interest from the long arm of the king and his representatives. Guillermo Moron (1963: 61) writes:

> Each big town had its own ruling oligarchy, who had local rather than national views. The important families of every town entrenched themselves in the town council and exercised a municipal dominion from it. The rod of justice, the royal standard, the right to process under a canopy, were means of gaining distinction. Each town was a little republic wanting to rule itself. Local political power, ruling the town, was in their hands, and they were the mainstay of local affairs.

The underground struggle between the local citizenry and the Spanish hierarchy often took on nationalistic versus imperialistic overtones. Appointments to high office in the colonies almost inevitably went to those born, reared, and educated in the mother country. The highest level to which a Creole (someone born in a colony) could aspire was a post of

inferior magistrate which generally placed him in the clerking bureaucracy. This defacto exclusion of the Creole from high office had the effect of creating a second class citizenry in the political sense of the term.

This prejudicial appointment practice, however, had a very pragmatic function in the grand scheme of monarchical control. As long as the powers of control in the colonies rested in the hands of individuals who were born, raised, and educated in Spain, the crown could be reasonably assured as to where their loyalties lay. If, on the other hand, positions of high power and influence were granted to the Creoles, it might well be the case that the actions of the appointees would reflect a bias toward their own kind at the expense of the king.

The Ultimate Measure of Monarchical Control

As briefly mentioned in an earlier section, the crown developed a mechanism of control which was designed to inhibit the attempts of colonial officials to circumvent the wishes of the king. Immediately upon the completion of an important colonial magistrate's term in office, a representative of the crown would hold a public investigation and hear all complaints of misconduct that anyone wished to bring against the former incumbent. "After receiving the latter's defense," Phelan (1960: 61) writes, "the judge passed sentence and remitted his findings to the Council ofthe Indies for final review. Heavy fines, confiscation of property, imprisonment, or all three, were customary sentences in cases of grave misconduct in office." This process of judicial review was called the residencia and the investigating authority was the juez de residencia.

A second ultimate control measure utilized by the crown was the visita, conducted by a representative of the king called a visitor-general. In contrast to the wide-ranging public inquiries conducted by the juez de residencia (after the official had already left office but was still physically present in the region) the visitor-general usually, in a secret investigation, centered his attention on a specific situation that had raised the attention and concern of the royalty in Spain. This inquiry was conducted while the man or men under investigation were still in office.

Both the residencia and the visita were mechanisms of control which continually impressed upon the minds of the colonial magistrates that, while they might be able to win the short-run game of personal aggrandizement, in the long run they must be accountable for their behavior to the king.

Colonial Education

In all his actions the monarch promoted a policy of fostering conditions which promoted a dependency of the colonies on the Spanish homeland. Just as the crown attempted to control the formulas for political and economic development of Spanish America, the king attempted to control educational development as well. Principally, the function of the educational process was to transmit the cultural heritage of Spain to the New World, and benefactors of the learning process were to be the children of the social elite who would one day serve as national leaders as well as loyal followers of the king.

Even though the character of the educational process was the preservation of old ideas rather than the stimulation of new ones, intellectual liberalism flourished among the faculty and students. The universities in the New World were bounded by the tradition of autonomy, adopted from the ancient University of Salamanca, which protected the thoughts and discussions which the monarchy frequently considered to be more dangerous than constructive (Thut & Adams, 1964). In short, the crown followed the practice of allowing for the formation of a minimum number of universities and only then at the strenuous insistence of the colonists themselves. As late as 1801, Charles IV rejected a petition for the transformation of the Real Colegio de San Buenaventura, founded in Mérida (Venezuela), into a university. The petition was denied because the king did not feel it was a good practice to spread education too far in the Américas. The first university in Venezuela, the Royal and Pontifical University of Caracas (now called the Central University of Venezuela) was inaugurated in 1721, 182 years after the first university in Latin America was founded.

Elementary and secondary education was generally considered to be outside the interest and responsibility of the king. Most of the pre-university levels of education which had found their way to the New World were carried by the Catholic religious orders as they sought to civilize and christianize the lower social classes of Creoles and Indians. George Sánchez (1963: 13) writes:

> For more than 60 years after the discovery of Venezuela, the only education offered its inhabitants was in the rudimentary efforts of the missions. It was not until 1560 that the first school was established in Coro. This school, and subsequent educational efforts by

> the clergy, limited its curriculum to the study of Spanish grammar, morals, and the rudiments of Latin. Such education was offered only to those of the privileged class, for it was not deemed at all desirable to educate others. As a matter of fact, as late as 1796, the city council of Caracas addressed itself to the king urging that education not be offered to the pardos, as that would cause this mulatto population to aspire to a status to which it was not destined. What little education a small fraction of the masses obtained was limited to Christian doctrine, first letters, and elementary arithmetic.

The leading families in Spanish America, however, did not have to depend on the educational processes afforded by the crown. Through education and travel in Europe or private classes with special tutors in the New World, the children of the social elite had an opportunity to develop a sophisticated understanding of the ideas and issues that dominated the times. Emerging out of this educational setting there arose an inspired body of men who had come alive with libertarian ideas and suddenly found themselves in the right place at the right time to give birth to a revolution.

The Era of the Caudillo

As the War of Independence concluded in Venezuela (1810-1823), the nation of Gran Colombia (under the leadership of Simón Bolivar) was created encompassing the geographical territory of present-day Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. But the dream of Gran Colombia with its ideals of popular and representative government soon died as the leaders of the revolution began to consume one another not long after they had defeated the Spanish

army. The uneasy alliance which had existed during the war between the local oligarchs, caudillos and revolutionary army generals quickly eroded into a greedy cut-and-thrust struggle for the spoils of victory. The death blow fell on the new nation of Gran Colombia when Bolivar's trusted lieutenant, General José Antonio Páez, renounced Bolivar's supreme authority and pulled Venezuela out of the collectivity.

For the first two decades following the rise of an independent Venezuela, the social and political institutions tended to retain their traditional frameworks. The reins of control had been firmly placed in the hands of the former colonists, but the continuing strategy of governance and elitists' domination provided a stabilizing authoritarian force until around 1835 when the political situation eroded into anarchy.

"Caudillism may be defined," writes Robert Gilmore (1964: 47), "as the union of personalism and violence for the conquest of power. It is a means for the selection and establishment of political leadership in the absence of a social structure and political groupings adequate to the functioning of representative government." As the institutions of the old order began to crumble like a sand castle, and because the only shoring structures for a new society (as proposed by Simón Bolivar) were soundly rejected, the vacuum of governance was filled with men whose motivation was their own self-interest and whose tactics were coercion, terror and force. The dark ages of Venezuela had arrived. The caudillo had taken command and would covet control for over 100 years.

The successive presidents of Venezuela were in effect national caudillos whose degree of ruling power was in direct proportion to the intensity of dominance they were capable of imposing on other caudillos competing for the

job. Through the decades caudillos rose from all socio-economic levels but, whatever their origins, they always made the interests of the upper class their own.

In order to capture and control the national leadership, it was necessary to forge a coalition of strong allies who would be satisfied that their own seemingly insatiable lust for power, status, and treasure would be increasingly soothed. In order to control the most prominent seat of power, the leader had to be capable of and willing to brutally enforce his policies and be on the lookout to destroy any pretenders to the throne who might make inappropriate motions.

Any caudillo worthy of the name maintained and promoted his position through the support of his own private army. To establish overtones of legitimacy, these private armies were referred to as the militia, or citizen soldiers. As Gilmore (1964: 52) writes, the caudillos "were chiefs, heads of clans, and great land owners, like Diego Colina who could at a word call up the cane cutters of the southern sierra in the Coro area, or like General Ramón Castillo who could draft a thousand men from his family properties, or like the Tellerias who through family occupancy of most of the higher and many of the middle and lower posts of state government could use the resources of the State of Falcón."

The militia eventually became that instrument of government through which the president could award positions of status to those warriers he wished to cultivate and reward. Luis Level de Goda (1893: 557) wrote that after the Federal Revolution (1859-1864) "almost all the governments of the locality were headed by generals, some so common and ignorant and even barbarous that they did not know how to read and write, but they were

cherished by the federal caudillo."

Education During the Dark Ages of the Caudillo

Just as the War of Independence was instilled with the idealism of men like Simón Bolivar and Antonio José Sucre, the break with the mother country was reinforced by the ideas of great Venezuelan educators and teachers such as Simón Rodríguez and Andrés Bello. With the coming of the caudillo, however, formal education reached the lowest of all possible priorities. George Sánchez (1963: 102-103) points out that:

> In Venezuela, the perverted sense of educational purpose which was inculcated by the circumstances of the colonial period and by the early decades of political independence had no opportunity to reform, once dictatorship was instituted. Though one may say a kind word here and there for Guzmán Blanco, when it comes to educational progress, not even such grudging approval can be accorded his successors, Cipriano Castro and Júan Vicente Gómez. These men, ignorant men arisen from the lower classes, carried with them to high places the peasant's conviction that education was the road to power and that, therefore, they should give it no encouragement lest it lead to their displacement.

The educational process served at least one valued function during this era and that was the training of secretaries. Many men of great power were illiterate or nearly illiterate and they needed men of letters to fabricate a supporting rationale behind their political movements as well as to communicate with the populace and other caudillos. It was not uncommon to find a professional secretary acting out the role of Rasputin as he counseled his illiterate leader. Even in the early years of the 20th century, when the treasury began to fill with the profits of black gold, it was the official practice that popular education was an avoidable drain on the public purse.

The Rise of Professional Militarism

The age of the caudillo was born with the crumbling of a social order which had been established by Spanish colonialism. The age of the caudillo decayed and died with the arrival of a new social order which was to give Venezuela its own set of institutions based on order and professionalism rather than disorder and anarchy.

The caudillo system of administration was dominating the political arena when a redefinition of economic, social, and military interest groups began to evolve, thus placing increasing pressure on the nation for greater stability and legitimacy in government. President Joaquín Crespo (1892-1898) is credited with initiating the drive toward a professional military out of his sense for the need of a strong military base of power. He had seized the presidency behind a band of armed guerrilla units and he intended to prevent his own demise by protecting himself from similar attempts of others. Toward the turn of the century military academies were established and professionally trained career officers emerged to take command of the military might of the nation and eventually the nation itself.

With the arrival of professional militarism there came a greater regimentation and stability in life, although not necessarily a better life for the Venezuelans. Robert Gilmore (1964: 11) writes:

> In the twentieth century ... the goals of the military institution have reflected a more corporate outlook in seeking to apply to Venezuelan society the standards of the career professional: hierarchy, discipline and capacitation. It is militarism, not caudillism, whose appearance and definition may be linked

> to the rise of the middle class, to the bureaucratization of government, to centralization of administrative authority, and to industrialization.

Militarism had inauguarated a new social order in Venezuela. The process of governance had made the transition from the turbulent boss rule of the caudillo to the despotic iron fist of the professional soldier. The final change of the guard came with the incredibly corrupt and brutal regime of Júan Vicente Gómez (1908-1935) and extended to the fall of General Marcos Pérez Jiménez (1952-1958), the last of the dictators.

Education During the Age of Venezuelan Militarism

Education fared no better in the militaristic period of Venezuelan history than it had during the epic of the caudillos. Minor reforms and improvements were initiated under the pressures of an impatient populace, but the basic prejudice of the leadership against education still held firm. Some significant administrative changes, however, did occur. In 1924 the public educational system was completely centralized under the control of the national government. In effect, this move had the outcome of making the entire educational process a function and responsibility of the national government. The centralization of the educational machinery also made it possible for the military leadership to promote their political ideology through the classrooms of the nation -- a practice not at all beneath the moral threshold of the generals.

Even though the educational process was being institutionalized for the first time on a national scale, there was nothing new about the organizational and administrative patterns which were adopted. The

organizational and administrative model which served the other institutions of government, such as the ministries of public works, health, and the treasury, were superimposed on the educational system. In this instance it was new wine in very old bottles.

At the death of President Júan Vicente Gómez in 1935, the educational institutions in Venezuela was in an incredibly deprived state. Over 80% of the total population was illiterate and less than 20% of the school-age (7-14) population was enrolled in school. The newly appointed Minister of Education, Dr. Alfredo Smith (1936: 3-4), made the following assessment of the educational scene.

> At least 80% of the population was illiterate and, scattered throughout the country, abandoned to its illiteracy; a Ministry of Public Instruction deaf to all private initiative that might tend towards the cultural betterment of the Venezuelan people; all ideas for improvement frowned upon, and all independence of judgment or of action persecuted. The schools without furniture and instructional materials; the towns with exceedingly few schools; the teachers without any protection whatsoever and submitted to the saddest kind of routine since, for many years past, no study was given to the technical aspects of school organization and the schools were administered from the desks of the Ministry... .

The educational facts of life did not see much improvement until the time when Venezuela's last dictator fell from power in 1958. George Sánchez (1963: 79) reports on the plight of the academic high schools during the last years of the militaristic period:

> The liceo (academic high school), just as all other levels of education, suffered during the dictatorships of 1908-1935 and of 1948-1958. When Gómez usurped power in 1908 there were only 297 students enrolled in secondary schools in the entire nation. In 1928 the number enrolled was 1,041. In 1935, when the population of school age (7-14) numbered

> almost 700,000 and, presumably, included about 400,000 of secondary school age, the enrollment in secondary schools (then four year institutions) was less than 3,000. The reforms instituted after the death of Gómez brought about rapid increases in the secondary school enrollment, which reached about 22,299 in 1948.

Education in a Democratic Venezuela

Over the years, as this writer taught or conducted research in Latin America, he became increasingly impressed with the tenacity of the process of organizational inertia. Ministries seem to continue functioning in spite of all human efforts to the contrary. Dr. Luis Prieto (1965: 77), a former Minister of Education and one of Venezuela's most respected educators, articulates the spirit and flavor of the administrative problem than can command the energy of the Ministry. Dr. Prieto is quoted at length because many of his remarks illustrate the historic legacy with which the Ministry seems to be struggling.

> The extreme centralization of functions and responsibilities is a sickness in our administrative processes; nothing happens without the approval of the Minister (of Education) or the President. No individual supervisor dares to take action even though it is within the margin of his authority, for fear that it will be disapproved by his superior. Even low level employees and students submit their requests, plans and criticisms directly to the President certain that no decision will be made without his consent. When a teacher needs an excused absence from school, for example, he doesn't request it from the director of the school nor the supervisor of the district, but directly from the Ministry of Education, and if possible, the President of Venezuela. When a request is denied by an immediate supervisor, it is sent to the President and

> approved without even consulting the immediate supervisor. This practice damages the principle of authority and responsibility. It then follows that all interested parties send their request to the highest authority and the immediate supervisors do not make decisions fearful that they will be overturned. Because of this practice the top men are overwhelmed with work as a result of their trying to resolve minor administrative and individual personal problems. Valuable time is lost which could be dedicated to the discussion of and planning for the great educational problems of the day. The real reason why there is so much running around and paper work generated in public offices is due to the extreme centralization of functions and responsibilities. The result is a strangulation of administrative activities.

Before examining the historic legacy in its modern context, it might be heuristic to look at the educational expansion that occurred with the arrival of the democratic process. The inception of modern democracy in Venezuela came in 1958 with the fall of the last military dictator, General Marcos Pérez Jiménez. In 1958 Venezuela had a population of 6,319,809 and of this number 38.4% were illiterate. Illiteracy was estimated to be 46.8% for those individuals 10 years of age or over (EDUPLAN: 3). In 1956, 48.4% of the children of primary school age were not attending school, and only 27.3% of those in school were reaching the 6th grade (final year of the primary school cycle). Only 39.9% of the secondary students were reaching the fifth and final year of their cycle.

After 1958 the political constraints of the dictatorship were removed and an enormous rate of enrollment resulted. The annual enrollment increment of the 1958-59 school year jumped almost three times that of the previous year. In 1957-58 the annual increment was 8.6% whereas in 1958-59 the annual increment rose to 22.5%. The number of primary age children out of school fell from 34.7% in 1958 to 19.1% in 1960 (CORDIPLAN: 66-95).

The period 1962 to date represents a stabilization in the patterns of annual enrollment increment (3.5% to 5% per year). By 1965 the illiteracy rate had decreased to 10.9% of the total population (EDUPLAN: 5). Also, only 18.2% of the children of primary school age were out of school (CORDIPLAN: 66). After over 450 years of languishing in the backwaters of political priorities, the educational process was finally being considered a valuable investment in the future rather than an unnecessary expense intended to pacify a few of the malcontents.

The Modern Organizational Hierarchy

The thesis being developed in this paper suggests that many of the modern day features of organization and administration are derived (either consciously or unconsciously) from the models established during the 300 years of Spanish colonial rule in the New World. The historic model of administration, in other words, became the model for all the subunits of government, including the Ministry of Education, and in many instances this ancient model has been relatively unchanged.

Just as the king sat alone atop his organizational pyramid, the President of Venezuela sits alone on top of the Ministry of Education as well as all the other ministries. The Ministry of Education, through the role of the Minister, acts in the name of the President just as the Council of the Indies acted for the king. A clearly defined hierarchy stretches down from the Minister of Education through national offices, regional offices, district offices, and finally to the local school offices.

The king followed the practice of rarely appointing a Creole to high office. By appointing native-born Spaniards to the high councils of

colonial government, the king was able to rest relatively assured that the loyalty of the appointed would be directed toward Spain and not the colonies. In a similar fashion, the Minister of Education is careful to appoint to sensitive offices only educators with the right political party persuations and whose party loyalty can be counted upon. An interesting example of the importance of this can be seen in the behavior of the teachers during the years which the Acción Democratica party controlled (1958-1969) the reins of government. During this period the teachers never went on strike; in fact, a reduction of wages was engineered on occasion.

The educational leadership performed its task well by keeping the teachers in line. When the reins of government transferred to the COPEI party in 1969, the first order of business for the teachers was to call a national strike of educators for higher wages. The first order of business of the new COPEI Ministry officials was to place party loyalists in sensitive educational roles so that they could be in a position to manage the behavior of the educators. In other words, one significant function of the hierarchy today is to serve the vested interests of the party in power just as it was during the colonial period.

Political neutrality in the educational institution is not a given condition; it never has been and there are few pressures at work to make it so. The unfortunate consequence of this situation is that the educational institution is an extension of the political institution and, therefore, educational decisions are often made for good political reasons rather than good educational reasons.

Centralized Decision-Making

Under the monarchical system of administration, all executive-type decisions were made in Spain, and only judicial-type decisions were made in the colonies. In other words, no formal authority existed in the colonies other than determining if specific colonists were carrying out the royal directives. This feature of governance had the effect of never permitting the local populace to develop a degree of autonomy.

In the modern ministry, virtually all significant decisions are reserved for the highest levels of the hierarchy, thus preventing any form of local autonomy from developing. All financial transactions, for example, are conducted directly from the ministry to the local level, bypassing all the intermediate levels. The intermediate officials serve basically as channels of communication and as inspectors to inform the higher officials of any problems that may have developed. Almost no actions can be taken at intermediate levels. The Center for Administrative and Social Research of the Venezuelan School of Public Administration (1967: 56-57) reports:

> With respect to the teaching process, the organizational hierarchy leaves no room for anyone (at lower levels) to select alternatives of action designed to reach a specific goal, nor can they establish any goals. The directives come from the Ministry of Education to the Regional Supervisor and from him to the District and Rural Supervisors who in turn transmit them to the School Directors and teachers. The lines of authority are completely defined; all the plans, programs, evaluation methods, etc., are elaborated at the top of the organization and transmitted from one level to another until all members of the school community adopt the same conduct.
>
> With respect to administrative aspects, there are these few decisions made by the Supervisors: to

> transfer teachers within the same school region, and the selection of teachers to attend in-service training programs ....

During the period of the Spanish colonial rule, an informal administrative system developed which permitted a great deal of flexibility in the decision-making process. The se acata pero no se cumple (I obey but I do not execute) principle became, in practice, a form of decentralization of decision-making. This is one feature of the administrative legacy that did not carry through to the modern era. During the militaristic period of Venezualan history, the overpowering despotic control of the military dictators did not permit the luxury of the no se cumple. Total obedience was called for and usually obtained. Thus, in the modern ministry where is no informal form of decentralized decision-making. The educational process is run from the top and only from the top -- a practice which creates an extremely rigid and slow responding system. Witness the episode which opened up this paper regarding the two-year wait for a bicycle. While this writer was studying the administrative system in Venezuela, he found the typical time lag between a request for a decision emanating from the lowest hierarchical level and a response to that request coming from the highest level was generally between six to twelve months -- except in cases of emergency which could override the many waystations.

Checks and Balances

Because of the extensive distance between the top of the royal hierarchy in Spain and the bottom of the hierarchy in the Americas, the crown built into the system a "self-correcting" mechanism which would prevent undesirable practices from developing. The king's tactic was the deliberate fostering of overlapping areas of responsibility.

The Ministry of Education finds itself caught in an updated version of the king's strategy for creating a self-correcting system. The Ministry of Education is required to act within the framework of a multi-ministry approval system in which several governmental ministries must pass judgment on major activities which are planned by the Ministry of Education. For example, if the Ministry of Education wishes to construct a large educational facility, it must obtain the consent of the Ministry of Public Works (which will do the construction), the Ministry of the Treasury (which will finance the construction) and the Central Office of Coordination and Planning (which will insure that the project is within the boundaries of the national plan). Each ministry, in other words, places a neat check on the activities of the others, therefore reducing the possibility of any one system overreaching itself.

The Idealistic Character of the Administrative System

Old Spain exported to the New World a conception of law which placed emphasis on ideal codes of behavior. In the modern educational bureaucracy, as well as the historic bureaucracy, a heavy emphasis is placed on drafting comprehensive bodies of rules to cover almost every contingency. The intent was, and is, to stipulate the optimum in behavior and events. In an earlier publication, the writer (Hanson, 1970b: 56) identified this facet of the modern ministry, but at the time was unaware of its historical context.

> Many of the administrative processes utilized in Venezuela seem to be formulated for ideal conditions that do not exist in the real world. Under ideal conditions everything is predictable and controllable. The highly rule oriented system guides the actors through their prepared steps. Unfortunately, there is little provision

> made for the unanticipated. Thus, when maps wear out, or windows are broken, or a typewriter is stolen, or a teacher wants to introduce a new way to teach reading, the administrative system is not equipped to deal rapidly with these unanticipated developments. That is to say, if the administrative process does not go according to plan, there is no built-in correction device (i.e., low level supervisor with authority) which can resolve the problem where it happens when it happens.
>
> Decisions on unanticipated subjects are almost inevitably made at the top of the organizational hierarchy. The resultant waste due to a decision-making time lag can weigh heavily on the teaching-learning process and school maintenance.

Standardization in Education

The process of organizational and administrative standardization is almost as comprehensive today as it was during the era of colonialism. Implicit in the process of standardization was the notion of incorporating an ideal condition in a statement of policy or prescribed event and requiring everybody to adjust to its conditions. As a result of the historic principle of standardization, the contemporary educational process is identical no matter whether the student lives in the agricultural region of the high Andes mountains, the oil-rich land of the northwest coast, the fishing villages of the northeast coast, the industrial zone of the west, or the sparsely populated jungles of the south. The socio-economic and manpower needs of specific regions, as well as the special educational needs of individual students, are discounted in the face of a standardized curriculum of study. The same school curriculum, for example, was in use from 1944 to 1969; thus, for 25 years every student in Venezuela was subjected to the same unchanging body of knowledge (Ministry of Education, 1944).

Communication Practices

Walking through the ponderous halls of the Ministry of Education today, one is quick to notice the small knots of men who have gathered from the far corners of the nation with the hope of having a few words with the all-powerful men who sit behind the impressive doors. To right a wrong, request a favor, tell a tale, that is why they have come, and frequently they get what they come for.

By receiving these men bearing petitions, the Ministry officials are circumventing, just as did the king, the tall rigid heirarchy that tends to screen out the most accurate information on conditions at the grass root level. The communication flow over the official channels is under some pressure to reflect realistic conditions as long as everyone knows that multiple, unofficial channels are open. The dysfunctional character of this multiple channel approach was well articulated in the earlier comments of Dr. Luis Prieto.

An Updated Visitor-General

During the colonial period, the ultimate mechanism of control was an inspection visit by a juez de residencia or visitor-general. These were men who commanded the ear of the king and could go directly to the grass roots level and conduct an in-depth investigation of an issue or incident without submitting to the constraints or conditions that surrounded the formally established hierarchy. In other words, men with special powers and a special blessing of the king would undertake an investigation which would call for circumventing all but the top of the hierarchy.

This tradition is also widely practiced in the contemporary Ministry.

As has been stated, there is virtually no significant decision-making authority delegated to the local level; therefore, no one is on the local scene who can make critical inspections or decisions. The Ministry maintains a fleet of national directors who fly hither and yon peeking, probing, and finally kicking the system where it is deemed necessary. These men work without much regard for the formally established hierarchy. This practice, however, has its consequences for the entire educational process. It certainly does not enhance the roles of the formally appointed hierarchical officials in terms of training, respect, and prestige, nor can it contribute toward attracting talented young people to these posts.

The visitor-general tactic of control also surfaces at one of the most vital spots in the educational process -- the evaluation of student performance. Final examinations are prepared and administered by a panel made up of at least two examiners from outside the student's school. The student's own teacher is also usually included on the panel. The examinations are extracted directly out of the official standardized curriculum; therefore, the teachers must come to grips with the official curriculum during the school year if their students are to pass their exams. In other words, innovative teaching which leads the students away from the formal curriculum is discouraged. If the curriculum says teach business arithmetic to children in an agricultural community, the teacher had better teach business arithmetic to the children in the agricultural community.

Education and the World of Work

An appropriate question at this concluding point in the paper concerns the output of the educational process. Why should the student in his study

of life objectives typically divorce himself from the basic economic needs of the developing nation and pursue educational careers which have traditionally been associated with the social elite? George Sánchez (1963: 102) responds to this question.

> The answer may be found in the social structure of Venezuela, the social structure in colonial times and subsequently. It should be recalled that in colonial times there was a wide gulf between the upper, privileged classes and the masses. All power, all wealth, all rights resided in the hands of a very small minority of the population -- Spaniards from Spain and Venezuelan Spaniards. The masses had nothing, and there was no class in between them and the dominant minority. That dominant minority was educated for their own kind of life, one of ease and 'refinement.' In actual fact, there was a very high correlation between wealth-power and impractical erudition. So it is not to wonder that the masses, as they aspire to wealth and power, should become convinced that the ultimate goal of education was a life of ease and 'refinement' to be attained through education. That is, one goes to school not to learn to work but to learn how to get out of working!

Conclusion

Modernization is frequently the word used to characterize the primary objective of third world nations and the countries of Latin America are certainly no exception. The reasons for the attention given to national development differ with the various countries: some apparently wish to indulge in conspicuous consumption, others want to keep up with their neighbors, a few seem to be looking for support of a political ideology, and a number seem motivated out of a social conscience. But whatever the driving force for a higher level of social and economic outputs, they all seem to share a common stumbling block-inadequate organizational and administrative procedures to carry forward a vigorous program of modernization.

This paper argues that the administrative model that has dominated the scene in Venezuela (and a number of other Latin American nations) is a living artifact of the structures laid down by the Spanish monarchy during the 300 years of colonial rule. Thus, an understanding of the nature of this traditional organizational model is useful in understanding the functioning of the modern system of administration as well as the forces which are inhibiting the processes of change.

Change does not come easily to an organization which has built in characteristics which are intended to defy change. A concentration of educational authority in a political party, centralized decision-making, a high level of rule elaboration, standardization, and multi-ministry checks and balances are all organizational elements which protect the stability and perpetuate the status quo of the educational process.

In order to initiate significant changes in this type of stagnated system, a major "across-the-board" reconstruction of the administrative process would have to take place. One which goes far beyond the piece-meal approach which has so often been tried and so often has failed. In other words, all the governmental ministries would have to be modified in some systematic fashion which would lead to a new form of national governance.

Interestingly enough, this form of "earthquake change" is now in its initial stages in Venezuela. An earlier paper by the author (Hanson, 1970a) analyzes the new organizational design which represents a significant break with the past. The new approach to organization and administration now being implemented in Venezuela represents the hope for a system that will support

rather than detract from the vital process of modernization. The data are not in which will determine whether or not this new struggle for change will be won or lost.

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